

September 2004



MONTANA GEAR UP

GAINING EARLY AWARENESS & READINESS FOR
UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS

Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education / Montana University System

GEARUP



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Director's Message: by Sandy Merdinger

Welcome back for a new school year! We are looking forward to year six being our best year yet! So many of you are doing such great work and are only getting better at it. I plan to visit many of you at your schools throughout the year to hear your visions for GEAR UP.

Staff Changes: While we are hearing that several of you are experiencing personnel changes in your schools, we are also experiencing personnel changes in state GEAR UP staff. It is with mixed feelings that I tell you Everall Fox has left his position with GEAR UP. Everall has accepted the position as Indian Education Specialist for OPI where he will focus on Indian Education for All. This last year I've grown to respect Everall's work, opinions and insights and his move is a loss to the GEAR UP team. However, this is a good move for Everall and I know he will serve OPI well in his new position. OPI has started the process to fill the GEAR UP Specialist position. If you or anyone you know is interested in the position, keep a watch on the OPI website for the opening at www.opi.state.mt.us. For schools that had Everall as the grant manager, please contact me with your grant questions, updates, etc. during the interim.

In addition, I'm delighted to announce two very capable people will be joining the OCHE GEAR UP staff later this month, both in part-time positions. Andrea Rankin and Annette Walstad will serve as program managers. Check the newsletter next month for an introduction to Annette and Andrea. In the meantime, be sure to visit with them at the fall conference.

Moving: Not only are we experiencing staff changes, the office location for OCHE GEAR UP staff has also changed. Due to finding mold in the basement of the Higher Education Building, we were moved from the basement this week and we now have space in the Montana Guaranteed Student Loan Program office on the second floor. Thanks so much to MGS LP for their generosity and giving us a temporary home! During this move we will not have access to our fax so please use 444-1469 if you need to send a fax.

Fall Conference: In the midst of these many changes we are busy preparing for the fall conference September 20 & 21 in Helena. I'm excited about our keynote speaker, Winston Johnson, and the many other sessions that are planned. Registrations brochures will arrive in your mailboxes soon and we appreciate your quick response. Please contact conference coordinator, Peter Butler, with any questions about the conference.

I look forward to seeing you and having some great conversation at the fall conference on September 20 & 21 in Helena!

As you may have noticed in your school's GEAR UP award letter, we are requesting that each school contribute at least one article during the course of the year to the GEAR UP spotlight section of the newsletter.

If you have other items that you would like to contribute, the 15th of every month will be the deadline to make submissions, and you can expect to receive a copy on or around the first of each month through next June.

Please send articles or suggestions to Peter Butler, at: pbutler@oche.montana.edu

PTC - "Pro Desktop" Partnership:

As a result of networking with the National Corporation for Community and Educational Partnerships (NCCEP), Montana GEAR UP has been selected as one of seven pilot programs across the country to participate in an exciting science education opportunity. Montana GEAR UP schools that are interested have the opportunity to receive Pro/DESKTOP 3D 8.0 design software, a top of the line engineering and design software valued at \$1000 per license, **free of charge**. Pro/DESKTOP 3D 8.0 design software is the same commercial software used by NASA and the Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

Interested schools will:

- Commit to sending a staff member to a two-day workshop in Billings sometime in the early fall.
- Commit to using software in either the classroom or after-school educational settings.

Montana GEAR UP will pay the travel costs of GEAR UP school staff members to attend training on using the software. This workshop will include lesson-planning activities that will allow educators the opportunity to develop customized applications of the software. Staff members who attend the training will be able to train teachers and students at their respective schools on how to use the software. Schools will receive site licenses and PTC will provide free updates to their software. The software is appropriate for middle school and high school use. Large schools may be interested in sending more than one staff member to the training but the training session is limited to 15-20 people, on a first come, first serve basis.

Dates, times and locations will be forthcoming soon as we are still working out the details with NCCEP and PTC representatives on logistics for the training in Billings. If this opportunity is of interest to your school, or if you have other questions, please contact your grant manager as soon as possible so we can plan appropriately for the training.

This last summer, two summer programs were held on opposite ends of the state that hosted 29 high school students from our GEAR UP schools. Both programs strived to demonstrate what college is going to be like for students. Students reported in their evaluations that they had fun learning in a hands-on environment and enjoyed meeting other people from around the state. The students who took part in the Dawson Community College program got a

Summer Program Report:

chance to dig up real dinosaur fossils while the students at Montana Tech in Butte visited three different campuses and capped the week off with the ropes course.



This summer funds were also provided to 12 schools to conduct local summer programs that mostly targeted credit recovery courses to keep our students on the right track towards graduation. As preparations for next year's summer programs are made, you are encouraged to provide input on ways you feel the programs can be made better and ideas how to involve more students in the programs.

September Reminders:

- Be sure to contact Lance and Tina soon to schedule financial aid presentations in your schools.
- Make your reservations at the Red Lion Colonial in Helena for this year's fall conference on September 20-21. Their phone number is 800-422-1002
- Final fiscal reports from the 2003-2004 school year are due September 30, 2004. Funds for 2004-2005 will not be released until reports are received and accepted.
- Implementation Plans and Budget Narratives for 2004-2005 are also due September 30th.
- The next liaisons meeting is scheduled for January 31-February 1, 2005 at Chico Hot Springs.
- Surveys will be mailed out by September 24 and are to be returned by November 5.

“Cultivating Student Success in High Performing Schools”: The Montana GEAR UP Fall Conference:

Plans for this year's fall conference are well underway, and are shaping up to what looks like will be our best program yet. GEAR UP staff has put together an array of presentations that will provide effective tools and techniques that can be used locally to engage students, parents teachers and your communities. Our keynote address will be delivered by Dr. Winston Johnson, former “Principal of the Year” and a recipient of the Educational Excellence Award. Dr. Johnson's style and enthusiasm for making all schools high performing schools will be sure to inspire and motivate one and all! General and concurrent sessions will showcase best practices in GEAR UP schools, student presentations and feedback, information on other state programs important to GEAR UP schools, and information and displays from local and national vendors.

As we enter the sixth year of GEAR UP and make preparations to write a proposal for further funding, the decision was made to have the conference in Helena so we could include as many state level partners as possible. If you haven't already booked your room, please contact the Red Lion Colonial Hotel in Helena at 1-406-443-2100. A block of 50 rooms is reserved and will be held until September 10th so be sure to call soon.

We encourage teachers and parents to attend and look forward to seeing each of you September 20- 21 in Helena. Further information and registration materials will be coming soon so keep an eye on your mail box.

In an effort to improve the response rate on the annual surveys done by our external evaluator, we are changing the survey timeframe. GEAR UP staff has heard from several of you that the best time to reach parents to complete the surveys is early in the fall. Therefore, the Montana Small Schools Alliance will mail the surveys by September 24 with a return date of November 5. After making the decision to administer the survey earlier, we realized this would also be a great help as we write the new GEAR UP grant. Thank you for your efforts distributing and returning completed surveys!

Annual Surveys:

Montana GEAR UP sponsored thirteen people from local programs to attend the national conference in Washington D.C. at the end of July. Attendees included: Roger Barber, Deputy Commissioner of Higher Education in Montana; Joel Voytoski, superintendent of Evergreen Schools; Clair Rasmussen, principal of Charlo High School; Renee Boisseau, principal from Kila school; Bob Malberg, counselor from Evergreen; Birdie Real Bird, counselor from Hardin; Juanita Roasting Stick, liaison from Rocky Boy; Linda Borntrager, teacher & liaison from Bloomfield; Sandy Merdinger, GEAR UP director; Kelly Hert, federal accountant; Peter Butler & Everall Fox, grant managers, and Tina Wagner outreach coordinator for MGSLLP. Tina wowed a large audience from around the country with a financial aid presentation, and provided many tools other states can replicate.

National GEAR UP Conference Report:



Conference attendees from right: Sandy Merdinger, Bob Malberg, Renee Boisseau, Joel Voytoski, Roger Barber, Everall Fox, Linda Borntrager, Juanita Roasting Stick and Birdie Real Bird

This year's conference was coordinated by the National Council for Community and Education Partnerships (NCCPEP) and planned in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Education. Even with the large contingent of participants from Montana, the number of sessions was too great to take all of them in. Topics highlighted were: the importance of K-16 education/community partnerships, the accomplishments of GEAR UP programs from around the country, new alliances among K-16 faculty, opportunities to learn about other federal and foundation-sponsored college awareness efforts, academic and student support programs, and new ways to engage local communities, businesses and professional associations in the work of GEAR UP partnerships.

State and National Items of Interest:

ACT's

Fall Educator Workshops

2004 Schedule & Information

ACT's Educator Workshops will provide you with practical ways to help more of your students be college ready. By attending one of these workshops you will learn methods to:

- Begin using college readiness benchmarks as early as grade 8
- Help students raise their personal expectations
- Get more students into rigorous college prep courses
- Reach students who aren't currently thinking about going to college.

You will also have the opportunity to learn about ACT assessment results for Montana's 2004 graduates, what's new with the ACT assessment, and about ACT test preparation tools.

These half day workshops are being provided at the following locations:

- **Holiday Inn Downtown—Helena - September 30th**
- **Montana State University—Billings - October 1st**
- **Montana State University—Northern in Havre, MT - October 1st**
- **Great Falls College of Technology - October 1st**
- **Flathead Valley Community College in Kalispell, MT - October 1st**

Registration is free and can be completed online at:
www.act.org/west/workshop.html

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Montana GEAR UP website
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Montana Guaranteed Student Loan
website: <http://www.mgslp.state.mt.us/>

National GEAR UP website:
<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OPE/gearup/index.html>